



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

ROBERT GORDON
DIRECTOR

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 25, 2021

TO: Michigan's 12 Federally Recognized Indian Tribes

FROM: Stacie Bladen, Executive Director, Children's Services Agency

SUBJECT: Children's Services Agency Commitment to Collaborate

Statement of Purpose

The Children's Services Agency (CSA) is committed to improving this relationship through open, honest, and collaborative communication. For this reason, the CSA has drafted this Commitment to Collaborate for review and input by tribal governments. It is our intention to be clear about what tribes can expect from CSA as we work to strengthen our relationship with tribal governments.

Acknowledgements

- The Children's Service Agency (CSA) recognizes that its prior interactions with tribal governments has fostered mistrust and disunity.
- Tribal governments are unlike any other entity the CSA works with, tribes are not merely a homogenous stakeholder group but are *distinct* sovereign nations that predate the United States' formation and maintain a unique political status and should be engaged accordingly.
- Tribal governments have primary authority and responsibility for each tribe's land and citizens.
- Communication and coordination with tribal governments is essential to the implementation of a meaningful tribal collaboration policy.

Commitment to Collaborate

The CSA is committed to beginning to implement collaborative governance principles in its work with tribal governments. Collaborative governance refers to an explicit strategy of incorporating tribal governments into mutual and consensus-oriented decision-making processes.

The goal of collaborative governance is to create a new system, inclusive of an evolved approach to consultation, that promotes equity and information sharing. Creating a collaborative governance structure will ensure the existing consultative relationship is furthered while also providing targeted engagement opportunities with tribal elected leaders and/or their designees.

All phases of the consultation process will be co-managed using the collaborative governance structure described below.

Collaborative Governance Process for Projects Initiated Within the Department

- 1) Early notice and invitation to collaborate on projects identified by CSA that may affect tribal governments, cases involving Indian children and families, or funding of such.
 - i. Notification will include sufficient information so that recipients can make informed decisions about the value of collaboration on this item. Notification should also occur sufficiently early in the process to allow for meaningful input by all parties.
 - ii. The Department will detail the complexity of the initiative or identified area of work, its potential implications, and any time or resource constraints.
 - iii. The Department will suggest an approach that will achieve meaningful collaboration and seek input from tribal governments on the recommended approach.
- 2) For Tribal governments who elected to collaborate on a project
 - i. CSA will propose a collaboration method that may include inclusion on a current workgroup or in a tribal specific workgroup.
- 3) Updates and information sharing for tribal governments who elected not to collaborate on a project.
 - i. Monthly updates and updates at Tribal State Partnership meetings about the status of the project.
- 4) Notice of a final draft ready for review.
 - i. An opportunity for all tribal governments to review any final draft.
 - ii. CSA will explain how tribal government input was considered in the final version.
 - iii. During this phase, each party will also provide feedback on the collaboration process.
- 5) Notice that item has been approved or project completed.

Closing Comments

Developing and maintaining a collaborative governance structure and consultative relationship is a work in progress. The processes will need to be assessed and may change based on feedback. CSA is committed to finding a balance between structure and circumstance. Tribal governments are encouraged to provide feedback throughout the collaboration process. The CSA will review this commitment with tribal governments at the end of 2021 to identify any areas that should be updated.